

Assembly Concurrent Resolution

No. 89

**Introduced by Assembly Members Galgiani and Portantino
(Coauthors: Assembly Members Ammiano, Hill, and Niello)**

August 17, 2009

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 89—Relative to Italian American Heritage Month.

LEGISLATIVE COUNSEL'S DIGEST

ACR 89, as introduced, Galgiani. Italian American Heritage Month.

This measure would designate the month of October 2009, and every October thereafter, as Italian American Heritage Month. This measure would encourage public schools to highlight and include Italian American achievements and contributions to the culture of California and to take steps to promote the inclusion of the achievements and contributions of Italian Americans to United States and California history and social science in elementary and secondary textbooks during the revision process for those textbooks.

Fiscal committee: no.

- 1 WHEREAS, A study published in December 2004 of social
- 2 science textbooks used in California schools and universities by
- 3 Lawrence DiStasi and the Italian American Textbook Committee,
- 4 titled The Treatment of Italian Americans in California Textbooks,
- 5 found that Italian American contributions were largely absent from
- 6 elementary, secondary, and postsecondary textbooks used in
- 7 California; and
- 8 WHEREAS, Italian Americans are the sixth largest ethnic group
- 9 in America numbering roughly 25 million people, with nearly 1.5

1 million residing in California. For much of the 20th century, Italian
2 Americans were the largest immigrant group in the United States,
3 yet they are not extended proper credit for their role in shaping
4 American culture; and

5 WHEREAS, As one of the country's greatest success stories,
6 Italian Americans made enormous contributions to our country
7 and state. For example, Amedeo Pietro "A.P." Giannini, born of
8 Italian immigrant parents in San Jose in 1870, established in the
9 Italian neighborhoods across California the first branch banking
10 system in the United States, known today as Bank of America.
11 The philosophy that spun the success of Bank of America was to
12 invest in common people to stimulate rapid economic growth. Mr.
13 Giannini's investments include the movie industry, the Golden
14 Gate Bridge, the Walt Disney Company, and much of today's
15 agribusiness; and

16 WHEREAS, Italian immigrant Marco Fontana arrived in the
17 United States in 1959 and started the California Packing Company
18 under the Del Monte label. His cannery soon became the largest
19 food processing company in the world. Domenico Ghirardelli
20 settled in San Francisco during the Gold Rush and founded the
21 Ghirardelli Chocolate empire. The movie industry, the fifth largest
22 employer in Los Angeles County, owes much of its success to
23 numerous Italian American artists, including Danny DeVito, John
24 Travolta, Sylvester Stallone, Al Pacino, and many others; and

25 WHEREAS, The wine industry in California owes much of its
26 success to Italian Americans. Italian pioneers established the early
27 wine industry in the California foothills of the Gold County
28 following the Gold Rush of 1848. In 1881, Italian immigrant
29 Andrea Sbarboro founded the Italian Swiss Colony at Asti, a
30 cooperative of Italian immigrants from the wine growing areas of
31 Northern Italy. The colony quickly became the largest winery in
32 the Napa and Sonoma Valleys. Later Italian winemakers like
33 Robert Mondavi and the Sebastiani family established world class
34 status for California wines. Beginning in the 1940s, Ernest Gallo
35 and Julio Gallo established the largest family owned winery in the
36 United States in California's central valley. Zinfandel might have
37 disappeared had it not been resurrected by the Robert Trinchero
38 family winery, the first to introduce white Zinfandel from their
39 Sutter Home Winery in the Napa Valley; and

1 WHEREAS, Italian Americans were among the earliest and
2 largest groups to settle in California, and they played a dominant
3 role in the creation of the state's agriculture, food processing,
4 branch banking, fishing, and wine industries. Little-known facts
5 regarding the experience and contributions of Italian Americans
6 include the following: (1) Between 1880 and 1920, about 4 million
7 Italians immigrated to the United States and nearly one-quarter of
8 Ellis Island immigrants were Italian. Restrictive immigration laws
9 at that time were directly aimed at Italian immigrants and based
10 on anti-Italian attitudes; (2) Although Italians constituted the largest
11 ethnic group in the American military during World War II, an
12 estimated 600,000 Italian immigrants nationwide suffered wartime
13 restrictions including internment and arrest, curfews, and travel
14 restrictions. Some 10,000 Italian Americans were forced to relocate
15 from coastal areas of California; and (3) Italians played a large
16 role in the development of agriculture in California. Their control
17 and development of fruit and vegetable industries in the central
18 valley, truck farming in major urban centers, and their influence
19 on the development of wine and grape industries left a legacy
20 shared by us all; and

21 WHEREAS, Italian American contributions to California and
22 United States history can be easily incorporated in the current
23 elementary and secondary curriculum content. Including the vital
24 role of Italian Americans in shaping California into the state it is
25 today will help pupils truly understand a significant part of our
26 state's unique culture and will help them understand how the
27 interdependence of people of diverse racial, ethnic, and cultural
28 differences makes our country truly great; and

29 WHEREAS, In 1996, the Legislature established the California
30 Italian-American Task Force. The highest priority of the task force
31 is the inclusion in the public school curriculum of Italian American
32 history, achievements, and contributions; and

33 WHEREAS, Italian American heritage and the contributions
34 made by individual Italian Americans deserve the state's
35 commendation and the designation of a month in their honor for
36 collective reflection and celebration; now, therefore, be it

37 *Resolved by the Assembly of the State of California, the Senate*
38 *thereof concurring*, That the Legislature designates the month of
39 October 2009, and every October thereafter, as Italian American
40 Heritage Month; and be it further

1 *Resolved*, That the Legislature encourages public schools to
2 highlight and include Italian American achievements and
3 contributions to the culture of California and to take steps to
4 promote the inclusion of Italian American history in the elementary
5 and secondary social science textbooks during the revision process
6 for those textbooks; and be it further
7 *Resolved*, That the Chief Clerk of the Assembly transmit copies
8 of this resolution to the author, members of the State Board of
9 Education, the Curriculum Development and Supplemental
10 Materials Commission, and to school districts for appropriate
11 distribution.